

Five Springs

CA-020-609

FIVE SPRINGS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-020-609)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

50,401 acres

The Five Springs WSA is located primarily in Lassen County, California (97%), with a small portion, (3%), in Washoe County, Nevada. The WSA contains 49,206 acres of BLM land and 1,195 acres of private land located in 8 parcels ranging in size from 40 to 640 acres. Surface owners own all subsurface mineral rights beneath their holdings. Cities nearest to the WSA are Susanville, California, (30 miles southwest), and Reno, Nevada (75 miles south of the WSA) (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded primarily by dirt roads. A major portion of the southeastern boundary is delineated by a service road for an underground telephone cable, and the Smoke Creek Ranch Road marks the balance of the southern boundary. An access road along the base of Five Springs Mountain constitutes the southwestern boundary. The Shinn Ranch to Stony Creek Road constitutes the northwestern boundary. The northern boundary is at the base of Rush Creek Mountain on an existing road, and the northeastern boundary is a road that travels along the base of Cherry Mountain, roughly parallel to Smoke Creek. Privately-owned lands mark the eastern boundary, which roughly follows a rocky escarpment with a irrigated meadow at the base. The extreme southeastern tip lies in Nevada.

The WSA is located on the western edge of the arid Great Basin characterized by eroded volcanic mountains. Five Springs Mountain, Cherry Mountain and Rush Creek Mountain are low, rolling mountains without prominent peaks located within the unit. Stony and Rush Creeks are mostly perennial creeks originating within the unit. Riparian vegetation is dense in parts of Rush Creek and slight to moderately dense in Stony Creek. Other than willows in the two creek bottoms and at springs, vegetation throughout the WSA is limited to sagebrush and associated shrubs and grasses. Elevations range from 4,500 feet to 6,300 feet. Numerous broad, open canyons are cut into the three prominent ridges that make up the core of the relief in the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Three different alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Eagle Lake-Cedarville EIS: no wilderness, partial wilderness, where 50% of the WSA would be designated wilderness and the remainder managed for multiple use, and all wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION RATIONALE

0	acres recommended for wilderness
49,206	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness.

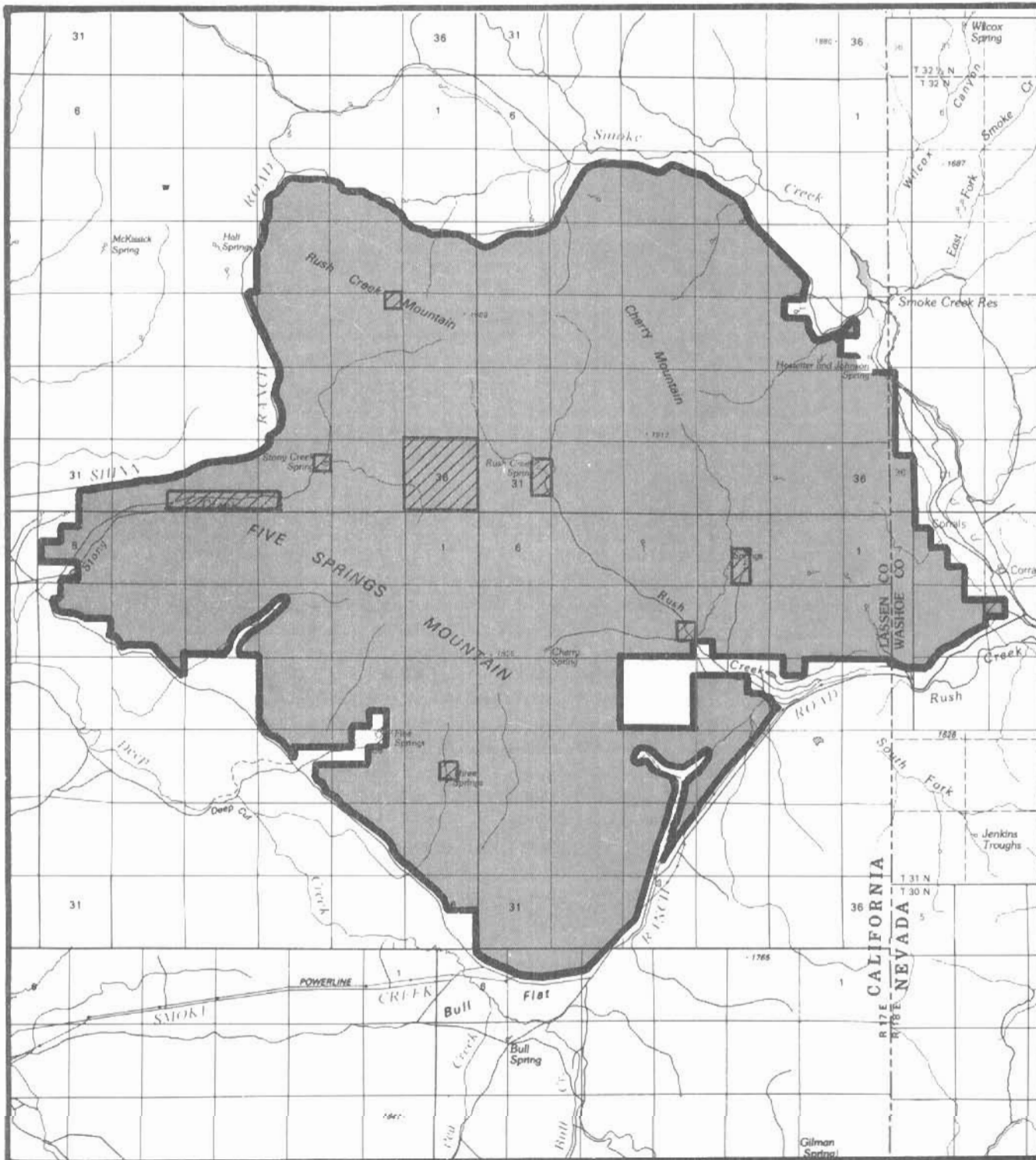
Within California 47,823 acres (97% of the WSA) are recommended nonsuitable. Within Nevada 1,383 acres (3% of the WSA) are recommended nonsuitable.

The all-wilderness alternative is the environmentally-preferred alternative because it would result in the least change from the existing natural environment. The selected alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The main reason the Five Springs WSA is recommended nonsuitable is because its wilderness qualities, while present, do not distinguish the WSA from much of the surrounding area. Rather, the WSA is typical of rock-strewn, low, mountainous sagebrush grassland found throughout the Great Basin/Modoc Plateau region and is not a unique representative of this area. The WSA is best characterized as common and uninteresting without any particularly interesting or unique features that would make it a good addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Another reason for not designating this WSA is that it would remain open and available for regionally important motorized recreational hunting. It would also allow it to remain available as a utility corridor for future powerlines.

The Five Springs WSA is a very popular chukar hunting area in Lassen County. It is one of the best areas in California for chukar hunting, providing an estimated 5,700 hunter days annually during the hunting season from October to the end of November. There are approximately 15 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use. Cross-country vehicle travel is also common as hunters seek to avoid lengthy approach walks. Wilderness designation of much of the WSA would eliminate the vehicle accessibility afforded by the WSA's many ways and open slopes and preclude much of this popular public use of the WSA.

Approximately nine miles along the WSA's southern side have been identified by the utility industry as needed for a high priority potential utility corridor. This area is one of the last remaining areas that can provide an east-west utility corridor through Northern California. No construction is planned at this time, but the alignment is considered necessary for development of future power corridors. This potential non-wilderness use of the WSA's southern side was also deemed a more important use of the area than wilderness designation.



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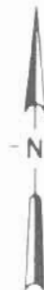
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- | | | |
|---|------|---|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Five Springs
Proposal
MAP-1**

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MILES



020-609
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>			
	<u>CA</u>	<u>NV</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	47,823	1,383	49,206
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0	0	0
Inholdings			
State	0	0	0
Private	1,195	0	1,195
Total	49,018	1,383	50,401
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>			
	<u>CA</u>	<u>NV</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
BLM (within WSA)	0	0	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0	0	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0	0	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0	0	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	0	0	0
Inholdings			
State	0	0	0
Private	0	0	0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>			
	<u>CA</u>	<u>NV</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	47,823	1,383	49,206
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0	0	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	48,823	1,383	49,206

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Five Springs WSA is predominantly natural with human imprints unnoticeable in the area as a whole. Dominant vegetation is sagebrush with associated shrubs and grasses. Small meadow areas occur around springs and riparian areas of willows and other streamside vegetation occur along portions of two intermittent streams, Rush Creek and Stony Creek.

Unnatural features within the WSA are livestock management facilities (14 stock ponds of one acre or less), 9 developed springs and 7.5 miles of fence) and motor vehicle access ways (15 miles).

All of the livestock facilities are low profile and are not noticeable beyond one-third mile of each facility. The very rocky surface of the WSA limits extensive development of new ways. Overall effect on naturalness is slight.

2. Solitude: The WSA's varied terrain and size provide opportunities for solitude. Three ridge-like mountains and two primary drainages five to six miles long, as well as numerous short drainages of one to four miles, provide sufficient variation in terrain to isolate visitors one from another.

From mid-October through the end of December, however, solitude within the WSA is disrupted. The Five Springs WSA is one of the most popular game bird hunting areas in Lassen County. During late October and through November and December approximately 5,700 hunter days occur in the WSA. Hunters drive virtually all of the access ways within the WSA and in some areas drive cross-country in search of good hunting areas. Heaviest vehicle activity occurs on ways that access the rocky slopes along the WSA's southwest and southeast sides. Traffic along the WSA's southeast boundary road, Smoke Creek Ranch Road, exceeds 100 vehicles per day on weekends then drops to lower levels mid-week. Opportunities for solitude decline as hunting activity increases. Following hunting season the WSA again has good opportunities for solitude.

Adjacent lands are either undeveloped public land or agricultural lands used for farming and livestock. Outside activities do not adversely affect solitude within the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist throughout the WSA; however, distinctive destination type features are lacking. Isolated springs, small riparian areas, broad ridges and canyons are common throughout the region. Activities that occur with very low frequency are hiking, wildlife observation, nature study and archeological sightseeing. Available water is very limited and would require treatment for human use.

4. Special Features

There is one known population of the plant Scutellaria holmgreniorum, on 20 acres on the western side of the unit. This plant is identified by BLM as a sensitive species. BLM sensitive species are usually plants of limited distribution where more

information is needed to determine their eventual status. The 20 acres are part of a 2,000-acre habitat area, most of which is outside the WSA.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 49,206 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Sagebrush Steppe ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a new ecosystem or landform to the NWPS. The WSA is in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. There are two existing wilderness areas, Jarbidge, Nevada, and South Warner, California, representing this ecotype.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Sagebrush Steppe	3	76,699	136	4,321,133
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Sagebrush Steppe	1	31,295	4	103,224
<u>NEVADA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Sagebrush Steppe	1	32,407	29	1,273,919

2. Expanding the opportunity for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The Five Springs WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness areas and other BLM wilderness study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

TABLE 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Redding	14	1,236,503	11	344,633
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: Within a 50 air mile radius of the Five Springs WSA are six BLM WSA's recommended for wilderness designation. The South Warner Wilderness, administered by the Modoc National Forest and located 45 miles north of the Five Springs WSA, is the only designated wilderness within 50 air miles of the Five Springs WSA.

C. Manageability

The entire WSA is manageable as wilderness. During fall hunting season, management would be difficult due to open terrain around the WSA's lower slopes adjacent to most boundary roads which are readily accessible to four-wheel drives. Numerous broad, gradually sloping canyons contain 15 miles of access ways that would be difficult to impossible to effectively close to motorized entry. Additionally, four cherrystemmed roads total six miles inside the WSA. It would be very difficult to prevent cross-country travel, easily accessed by four miles of these cherrystemmed roads, because the adjacent portions of the WSA are also broad and open. More intensive management would be required. Continuous field presence would be necessary to prevent hunters from using these routes to popular hunting areas within the WSA and from heading off cross-country from boundary roads.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at time of preliminary suitable recommendation: The geology and mineralization of the Five Springs WSA is described in the Unit Resource Analysis (URA) which was based on data in the Mineral Resource Inventory (MRI) file (1979-1980) for the BLM Cal-Neva Planning Unit. The URA was updated in August of 1980. BLM MRI data in the Affected Environment section of the Eagle Lake-Cedarville EIS prepared in 1987 indicated that the WSA has no history or visible evidence of

activities with respect to locatable minerals, no known development of salable minerals in the WSA and the potential for oil and gas is unknown. There had been three previous leases covering 9,225 acres of the WSA which were dropped prior to May 20, 1987. The WSA is not considered valuable for geothermal or sodium. Mineral data for this WSA is very sparse.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final decision:

No U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

No new information on the geology or mineralization of this WSA has been received from other agencies or the public since the Final EIS was published.

According to BLM mineral records dated March 25, 1988, no mining claims or mineral leases/sales exist within the Five Springs WSA. Because the mineral potential for this WSA is considered to be very low, no mineral potential map was prepared.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness.

TABLE 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Values of naturalness, solitude & primitive recreation would be reduced on up to 8,000 acres if 9 miles of powerline are built in the proposed utility corridor in the nonwilderness area. The perception of naturalness would be reduced on 415 acres to proposed range improvements. Wilderness values would be slightly reduced on 40,460 acres due to continual OHV use.	Solitude would be slightly enhanced over present levels by closing 15 miles of way and eliminating 5,700 visitor-days of OHV use. There would be some continued vehicle travel for range management. There would also be illegal OHV use on the perimeter of the area as no natural barriers exist. The perception of naturalness would be reduced on 415 acres due to range improvements.	Naturalness, solitude & primitive recreation would remain as they exist on the 25,174 acres designated wilderness. These values would be lost on up to 8,000 acres in the non-wilderness portion if 9 miles of powerline are built in the proposed utility corridor. Perception of naturalness would be reduced on 415 acres due to range improvements. Solitude would continue to be disturbed by 5,700 visitor-days of OHV use on 15 miles of ways.
Recreational OHV Use	No impact, as current recreational OHV use of 5,600 visitor-days would continue.	Recreational OHV use of 5,600 visitor-days associated with chukar hunting would be foregone annually. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be slight. Heavy chukar hunting use would decline due to the closure of 15 miles of ways.	No significant impact. The non-suitable area contains the existing 15 miles of ways that support the 5,600 visitor days of recreational vehicle use.
Trans Sierra Utility Corridor	No impact. The 9-mile utility corridor would be available for future construction of high voltage powerlines.	There could be no powerline built in the 9-mile utility corridor. Any future powerline would have to be built in a more expensive location outside the WSA.	No impact. The 9-mile utility corridor would be available for future construction of a high voltage powerline.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Endangered Species	The potential for impacts on <u>Scrubellaria holmgreniorum</u> would not be significant due to the small number of surface disturbing possibilities and the mitigating measures available at each location. No activities are planned in the area where the plant is found.	No impact on endangered species. The one small stock pond proposed is located away from known population of <u>Scrubellaria holmgreniorum</u> .	The potential for impacts on <u>Scrubellaria holmgreniorum</u> would not be significant due to the small number of possible surface disturbing activities and the mitigating measures available at each location. No activities are planned in area where plant is found.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No significant local social or economic considerations were identified in the draft and final Eagle Lake-Cedarville Wilderness EIS's. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the inventory process and early stages of EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for wilderness management.

A technical review team (TRT) was also used to help identify issues and formulate the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. It was used as a tool to lessen the chances of polarization between interest groups and to provide the Bureau with high quality public input representative of the positions of key groups interested in or affected by wilderness designations. Input provided by the TRT was used in developing the wilderness recommendations for this WSA.

For the Eagle Lake-Cedarville Wilderness EIS that included the Five Springs WSA, the Susanville District Advisory Council identified the following interested groups and resources to be represented on an eight-member TRT: livestock-adjacent land owners; wildlife-agencies-sportsmen-wilderness-environmental-dispersed recreation; minerals-energy-utilities, wild horses; motorized recreation, cultural-historical-archeological; Bureau of Land Management. The representatives were very knowledgeable and highly respected members of their interest groups. The TRT members toured the WSA, held lengthy discussions spanning many weeks and eventually reached unanimous

agreement that a no-wilderness recommendation was appropriate for the Five Springs WSA. The team's recommendation of non-suitable was supported by the Susanville District Advisory Council and by BLM, and is the recommended action for this WSA.

Key issues raised through public involvement and analyzed by the TRT and in the EIS were: a wilderness complex where five adjacent WSAs, separated only by boundary roads (including Five Springs WSA), would be managed as a wilderness complex inclusive of the road (this was analyzed in the all-wilderness alternative of the EIS); the quality of the wilderness resource and how much was appropriate to be preserved and managed as wilderness; concern that wilderness would prevent potential mineral development, livestock management activities and motorized recreation access for hunting; concern that wilderness would limit management of wild horses and burro populations; and concern that wilderness would preclude development of potential high-voltage electric transmission lines through the region. All of these issues were addressed in each of the three alternatives analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness (50% suitable, 50% non-suitable) and no wilderness. During formal public reviews of the draft EIS, a total of 306 comments were received that addressed this WSA specifically or as part of general comments on all WSA's in the draft EIS. Of the 306 comments received, 11 were oral comments received at public hearings held in Cedarville and Susanville, California and in Reno, Nevada. The remaining 295 comments received were written. In general, 32 respondents supported all wilderness, 263 supported no wilderness (recommended by BLM) and 1 supported partial wilderness. Ten respondents supported more wilderness than was addressed in the draft EIS.

Those favoring wilderness cited the area's natural character, opportunities for primitive recreation (mainly hiking and sightseeing), opportunities for solitude and archeological values within the WSA. Inclusion of the area in the NWPS as a representative of volcanic landforms in the desert shrub ecosystem was also cited.

Those opposed to wilderness cited concern that despite livestock's grandfathered provisions in the Wilderness Act, livestock management activities (particularly motorized access for water facility inspection and maintenance and sheep camp movement) would be restricted. Restrictions or prohibition on development of new water facilities, springs and reservoirs, was also cited as reasons for opposition to wilderness. Others opposed to wilderness cited the elimination of possible mineral development in designated wilderness as a general reason without reference to specific mineral values within the WSA.

All of the following local and state agencies supported the BLM no-wilderness alternative:

Lassen County (California) Board of Supervisors; Nevada County (California) Supervisor Joel Gustafson; The State of Nevada through the Nevada Clearinghouse; The Nevada Division of State

Parks; The Nevada Department of Minerals; and The California Department of Fish and Game. Washoe County, Nevada did not submit comments.

Letters were received from two State agencies and five Federal agencies that took no position as to a recommendation on alternatives, issues, or acreage to be preserved as wilderness. They were from the California Department of Water Resources, Nevada Division of Historic Preservation, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Environmental Protection Agency.